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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 006985

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: THREE SOUTHEASTERN TURKISH MAYORS

REFS: A. ADANA 147

[1](#)B. ANKARA 6213

Classified by Political Counselor John Kunstadter, E.O. 12958, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

This message is from AmConsul Adana.

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: In the Southeastern Turkish towns of Viransehir, Kiziltepe, and Sirnak, pro-Kurdish DEHAP party mayors have differing views on the Democratic Society Movement (DSM), which appears to be DEHAP,s successor party: while two mayors welcomed DSM, another thought DSM,s leaders were only seeking to enhance their personal standing. Two Sirnak lawyers are also unimpressed with DSM. There is a widespread view in the Southeast that perceived U.S. support for Kurdish autonomy in Iraq will have a spillover effect in the Southeast. Bar and municipal contacts predicted that internally displaced citizens would probably approach the ECHR for compensation instead of the recently formed Compensation Commissions. End Summary.

Is the new movement "new"?

[1](#)2. (C) Southeastern Turkey,s pro-Kurdish DEHAP party mayors share a party, but not all think alike. In Viransehir and Kiziltepe, two towns an hour apart, mayors gave different opinions on a number of topics. Viransehir,s second-term DEHAP Mayor Emrullah Cin viewed the new Democratic Society Movement (DSM) (ref A) as a positive development. "Reaching out to others is a good thing," he said. Sirnak,s DEHAP Mayor Ahmet Ertak agreed. However, Kiziltepe DEHAP Mayor Cihan Sincar was downbeat on most everything, including DSM. She hinted that she thought the people involved in the DSM effort may be using it to enhance their own standing. "They won't achieve anything," she said, "if they don't define the problem correctly." Sincar also took exception to Leyla Zana having reportedly told a Swiss op-ed writer that there was no more torture in Turkey: "I'm here, and I say there is," she insisted. (Note: Sincar's husband, Mehmet Sincar, was elected to Parliament as a pro-Kurdish DEP party (one of DEHAP,s predecessors) deputy along with Leyla Zana. He was murdered in 1993 in a mysterious killing in Bingol, and to date authorities have not charged anyone in his killing. End note.) Cizre attorneys Mehmet Ali Dinler and Abdulgaffar Dursun were equally unimpressed with the DSM, claiming it was "the same old people" involved and there was nothing new or exciting about the movement.

U.S. Iraq Policy Means &The Arrow has Left the Bow"

[1](#)3. (C) The idea of a separate &Kurdistan8 still appears not to have been extinguished in the Southeast. Mayor Sincar referred to the &Kurdish problem8 as a regional rather than internal Turkish issue. Attorneys Dinler and Dursun also appeared separatist. The attorneys expressed pleasure with President Bush's reelection and stated they wanted to see actions like that in Iraq in both Syria and Iran. "The arrow has left the bow," they said, reflecting the widely-held perception in Southeast Turkey that U.S. support for Kurdish autonomy in Northern Iraq will inevitably have a (positive, in eyes of these lawyers) spillover effect for Kurds in Turkey and elsewhere in the region. Poloff emphasized that the European Union is the best way forward for reform in Turkey, and stressed U.S. support for the territorial integrity of Iraq. Separately, Sincar made expressed dismay at recent media reports -- reports she believes -- that Turkey is readying 40,000 troops for to enter Iraq in case of trouble in Kirkuk.

One Mayor Focusing on Development and Reconciliation

[1](#)4. (SBU) Viransehir, a town of 160,000, has little industry or economic activity, and has seen over the past ten years a significant influx of migrants from surrounding villages. In the 1990s Viransehir benefited from oil smuggling from the Habur border gate. Mayor Cin is trying to stay positive, clear the city's debts and rustle up projects. Instead of politics, during a recent visit he wanted to showcase his efforts by providing a tour the new community center. The center has Viransehir,s first movie theater, classrooms, a

library, and an income-generating weaving project. Cin was vague on how the project was funded, like other DEHAP mayors who have told us of community projects such as health centers and cultural festivals. He claimed that at least 40,000 of the city's citizens (including seven of his family members) were in Europe currently, and remittances may play a role in funding such projects, highly visible to community members.

15. (C) Cin was dismissive of the Social Solidarity Fund's Conditional Cash Transfer program (ref B). (Note: Two governors with whom we spoke in the region, however, were positive about the program and seemed interested to hear about the significant U.S. contribution to that effort. End Note.) He worried that inadequate monitoring would result in the project having little impact on education in the Southeast. "Parents will take the money and still have the kids out picking cotton," he said. He claimed that money being transferred through the government to the poorest in the Southeast is not as effective as community development projects at the grassroots level through, for example, sister city programs (he recently had a good experience with such a project with Italians).

16. (C) Ertak is focused on reconciliation, bringing people together during Ramadan by hosting a series of themed iftar dinners for different segments of the community, most recently an iftar dinner for 150 local women. Ertak claimed that he had good relations with government officials in Sirnak, although relations with the military in Sirnak had been "cool" -- but perhaps thawing slightly in the wake of the October 29 National Day celebration. However, in October two Ministers from Ankara visited Sirnak and neither paid a courtesy call on him, he noted. Sincar is pessimistic about the prospects for improvements in the lives of Turkey's ethnic Kurdish population, EU or no EU. (Note: She expressed these views in mid-November, even before the widely-publicized shooting death in Kiziltepe of Ahmet Kaymaz and his 12-year-old son (septel), that have resulted in demonstrations by some 10,000 Kiziltepe residents in the streets of this town. End note.) She also predicted, as did the Cizre attorneys, that citizens applying to Compensation Commissions would refuse the amounts offered them and instead take their cases to the European Court of Human Rights, where they believe they can get better compensation.

17. (C) Comment: The three DEHAP mayors illustrate the wide range of views and styles within the party. In Viransehir there was a roll-up-your-sleeves, community development approach. Sirnak's mayor gave the impression he had conflict-avoidance approach, and we sensed a hint of fear around him. (Note: For good reason. For years, government security forces made Sirnak the Southeast, mostly tightly-controlled province; DEHAP's predecessor HADEP was in effect banned. Two HADEP officials disappeared in Sirnak in 2000, having last been seen entering a jandarma station. End Note.) In Kiziltepe, defiance, anger and despair characterized the mood in the Mayor's office. Regardless of how a mayor goes about his/her job, however, not much meaningful development or public works can take place in their majority-Kurdish municipalities absent real government support, including fiscal support. Regional observers tell us that Kurds do not expect DEHAP to solve their economic problems, they just want an outlet to express their Kurdish identity. For others, an outlet for expressing Kurdish identity, let alone economic development, does not seem to be enough. End comment.

EDELMAN